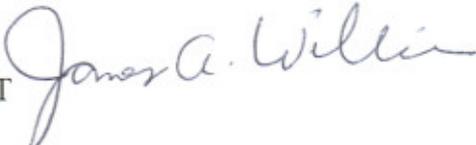




Homeland Security

April 21, 2006

MEMORANDUM FOR: ALL US-VISIT PERSONNEL

FROM: James A. Williams 
Director, US-VISIT

SUBJECT: Compliance with Freedom of Information Act Requirements

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) establishes the public's right to access records created or maintained by Government agencies. The FOIA sheds light on Government activities and helps ensure openness and accountability.

Many of you have heard me say that we want to make our activities transparent. One of our methods to help ensure transparency is through outreach activities, designed to keep the public informed of our current activities through briefings and news releases. Another method for ensuring transparency is the disclosure of information to the public under FOIA.

I realize that some FOIA requests require extensive searches for responsive agency records and time devoted to review of those records. This search and review often conflict with fulfilling the tasks critical to our mission. In those cases where our ongoing operational requirements will be impacted by the time needed to conduct searches and reviews, please notify your manager. If a resolution cannot be reached, you may contact Barbara Harrison, our FOIA Officer, to discuss your concerns. Ms. Harrison may be able to negotiate an extension with the FOIA requester so both can be accomplished. Keep in mind, however, that the FOIA mandates responses within 20 working days. While this requirement is often difficult to achieve, it is a requirement US-VISIT should strive to meet for each FOIA request. Therefore, I urge all of you to make every reasonable attempt to be responsive to FOIA requests.

The President recently signed an Executive Order directing that Government agencies improve their FOIA programs and focus on customer satisfaction. Ms. Harrison prepared an improvement plan to streamline our FOIA process and decrease the time to respond to FOIA requests. One of the areas of primary focus is education, so you will soon see articles and training directed at increasing your understanding of the FOIA process.

I know I can count on you to join me in supporting the FOIA Program.